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**BARSHEFSKY APPLAUDS SENATE PASSAGE OF  
LEGISLATION ON TRADE WITH AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky today applauded the overwhelming Senate passage of landmark legislation to strengthen America's trade relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.

"Today the Senate has shown remarkable leadership in the cause of development, open markets and democratization worldwide; and has also acted to create new opportunities for Americans," said Ambassador Barshefsky. "This is a great day for Africa and the Caribbean, and a strong statement of bipartisan support for American leadership in trade policy as the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference in Seattle approaches."

"I want to thank particularly Senators Daschle, Lott, Roth, Moynihan, Graham, Dodd, Feinstein and Landrieu, as well as Congressman Rangel, for their hard work and leadership in moving this important legislation forward."

The Senate legislation includes the African Growth and Opportunity Act, already passed by the House; enhancement of the Caribbean Basin Initiative; as well as renewal of the Generalized System of Preferences and Trade Adjustment Assistance for displaced American workers.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act, already passed by the House, responds to an era of reform and renewal in Africa, which South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki has called an "African Renaissance." It encourages economic and political reforms, by offering reforming African nations a set of incentives and benefits that will help them grow and enter the world economy. Such benefits include expanded duty-free trade benefits, market access for textiles, support for African regional integration efforts, increased commitment by the Ex-Im Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corporation to U.S. investors in Africa, significant debt relief, and enhanced trade and investment

dialogue.

“In passing the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the Senate has taken a vital step toward promoting growth and reform in Africa, and an era of mutually beneficial partnership between the United States and the nations of this continent,” said Barshefsky.

The enhancement of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) takes advantage of a similar era of progress, which over the past ten years has led the region from an era of warfare and poverty to one of hope. Throughout the region, living standards have risen, and human rights and attention to core labor standards have improved immeasurably. The enhancement of CBI – a set of measures which increase trade between the U.S. and the Caribbean – will both spur further development in the region and have long-term benefits to the U.S. economy by strengthening U.S.-CBI partnerships in the textile and apparel industry. Its passage at this moment is especially important, as it will create a source of international investor confidence as Central American and Caribbean countries rebuild in the wake of Hurricanes Mitch and George.

“When our friends overseas are doing the right things – for themselves and for us – we should recognize and encourage them,” said Barshefsky. “That is what the Senate has done this week by passing the Africa and CBI initiative. We will now work closely with Senate and House leaders and supporters of this bill to ensure a successful conference and rapid enactment into law.”